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1. An endoscope comprising:
a video camera having a distal end and a proximal end;
a cable connected to said video camera, said cable including means for transmitting light to the area in front of said distal end of said camera and electrical conductors for carrying video image signals from said camera to apparatus for processing said signals and generating a video display of the image seen by said camera; and

a malleable shaft having proximal and distal ends with said distal end being attached to the proximal end of said camera so that said shaft functions as a support for said camera, said shaft also acting to carry and support said cable.

2. An endoscope according to claim 1 wherein said cable is releasably attached to said shaft.

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3. An endoscope according to claim 1 wherein said cable is positioned within a groove formed in the surface of said shaft.

4. An endoscope according to claim 3 wherein said cable is frictionally secured within said groove.

5. An endoscope according to claim 1 wherein said shaft comprises a rod of elastomeric material and a metal wire extending lengthwise through said rod.

6. The endoscope in accordance with claim 3 wherein said wire is made of aluminum or lead.

7. An endoscope in accordance with claim 3 further comprising a spring clip securing said distal end of said shaft to said camera.

8. An endoscope according to claim 1 wherein said shaft is hollow and malleable, and said cable extends within said shaft.

Suba37 9. An endoscope in accordance with claim 1 wherein said shaft comprises a first helical coil member defining a passageway for said cable, and a second helical coil member surrounding said first helical coil member.

10. An endoscope in accordance with claim 9 wherein said shaft further includes an electrically-insulating sheath surrounding said first and second helical coil members.

11. An endoscope in accordance with claim 1 wherein said camera is characterized by first and second tubular members with said first tubular member surrounding said second tubular member, and said cable comprises a plurality of optical fibers having first and second opposite ends, with said first ends being disposed between said first and second tubular members.

12. An endoscope comprising:

a video camera;

a malleable shaft having proximal and distal ends, with said distal end being connected to said camera;

a flexible cable disposed in said shaft and having therein electrical wiring for image transmission and fiber-optic lines for illumination of a surgical site, said cable being fixed at a distal end thereof to said camera;

said electrical wiring for image transmission being in communication with a camera control means;

said fiber-optic lines for illumination being in communication with a light source; and

the shape of said shaft being manually reformable so that (a) it may be configured to a selected shape to facilitate access to a surgical site and (b) is adapted to remain in said selected shape until manually reformed to another shape.

13. An endoscope comprising:

a video camera;

a malleable shaft having proximal and distal ends, with said distal end being connected to said camera;

a flexible cable comprising electrical wiring for image transmission and fiber-optic lines for illumination of a surgical site, said cable being fixed at a distal end thereof to said camera;

said cable being releasably connected to said shaft so as to be supported by said shaft;

said shaft comprising a manually positionable tubular structure that is position retentive until manually repositioned, whereby said shaft may be manually positioned into a selected configuration for access to a surgical site and is adapted to remain in such selected configuration until manually moved to another configuration.

14. The endoscope in accordance with claim 13 wherein said cable is disposed in a lengthwise groove in said shaft.

15. An endoscope in accordance with claim 13 wherein said shaft comprises a rod of elastomeric material and a metal wire extending lengthwise through said rod.

16. An endoscope in accordance with claim 13 comprising means at said distal end of said shaft for releasably connecting said shaft to said camera.

17. An endoscope in accordance with claim 16 further comprising means for releasably connecting the proximal end of said shaft to said support body.

Subpart 7 18. An endoscope in accordance with claim 15 wherein said metal wire is made of lead or aluminum.

19. An endoscope in accordance with claim 13 wherein said cable includes a flexible electrically-insulating sheath surrounding said electrical wiring and said fiber-optic lines.

20. An endoscope comprising:
a video camera;

flexible cable means attached to said camera, said flexible cable means including a plurality of electrical conductors for transmission of electronic signals produced by said camera that are representative of the optical image sensed by said camera, and a plurality of optical fibers for transmitting light to the optical sight viewed by said video camera; and

a shaft detachably connected to and supporting said flexible cable means.

21. An endoscope according to claim 20 wherein said shaft is malleable in the sense that it can be bent manually to a selected shape and will hold that shape until it is bent manually to another selected shape.

22. An endoscope according to claim 20 wherein said shaft comprises an elongate body of a flexible material and includes a rod of malleable metal embedded within and extending lengthwise of said body.

23. An endoscope according to claim 22 wherein said shaft has a longitudinally-extending groove and said cable means comprises a cable that is removably disposed in said groove in frictional engagement with said body of flexible material.

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24. An endoscope comprising:
a video camera;

flexible cable means attached to said camera, said flexible cable means including a plurality of electrical conductors for transmission of electronic signals produced by said camera that are representative of the optical image sensed by said camera, and a plurality of optical fibers for transmitting light to the optical sight viewed by said video camera;

said flexible cable means comprising connector means for connecting said electrical conductors to means for processing the electronic signals generated by said camera and connector means for connecting said optical fibers to a light source; and

a shaft surrounding and supporting said flexible cable means, said shaft being flexible and malleable in the sense that said shaft can be bent manually to a selected shape and will hold that shape until it is bent manually to another selected shape.

25. An endoscope in accordance with claim 24 wherein said shaft comprises at least one elongate coil of a flexible and resilient metal extending lengthwise of said shaft.

26. An endoscope comprising:
a micro video camera;

a flexible cable having a distal end and a proximal end, said distal end being connected to said camera, said cable comprising electrical conductors for transmitting electronic signals from said camera representative of the image viewed by said camera and fiber-optic lines for conducting light to said camera so as to illuminate the surgical site viewed by the camera;

a malleable shaft having proximal and distal ends and a longitudinally-extending passageway for detachably receiving said flexible cable, whereby said cable is supported by said shaft, and

means connecting said camera to said distal end of said shaft, whereby both said camera and said cable are supported by said shaft so as to move therewith as the shaft is manipulated in relation to a surgical site.

27. An endoscope in accordance with claim 26 wherein said electrical conductors are in communication with a camera signal processing means.

28. An endoscope in accordance with claim 26 wherein said fiber-optic lines for illumination are connected at the proximal end of said cable to a light source for providing light to illuminate a surgical site.

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